

# The Athenian Mercury.

Tuesday, May 7. 1695.

Quest. 1.

**G**entlemen, I have read in one of your Mercuries your opinion, that there is a world in the Moon, and nothing in the writings of Moses speaks against it, you say; methinks there seems there to be an argument against it, where 'tis said; (let there be lights in the firmament of Heaven, to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years); and again (to give light upon the Earth), which sort of argument on this account is thereabouts often recited, I mean for the end for which they were created: but if you say there might be and are lights for the Earth, yet also the Moon may be a world, I see no more reason for it than that you may say the same of the Sun, for there are equal words for them both; and why should Moses speak of a thing that really is not? sure had it been so, at least that men could have found it out, truth would have hinted somewhat of it to us; And that there are not more worlds than this one, this seems to prove; that Christ who is one God hath died for this world, and therein for all, now suppose you the inhabitants of another world should sin, can any thing less than a sacrifice satisfy for sin, and can Christ dye twice, or cannot they sin, or how? I could rather grant it were inhabited by Angels, or is that your meaning? Is not this and the like opinion of other worlds injurious to true faith? I cannot think you would be offensive. Is it not a bad Device of the world against which we have vowed? Not that I think you would devise so. Is it not Pride in the mind, and an unbounded restlessness and over-tendency of thought? Well, I conclude, if it be as you say, it must be a large soul to receive it; pray your farther opinion?

**Ans.** The Scriptures were given us as the rule of faith and morality, and not as a System of natural Philosophy. And therefore there was no need of speaking natural things according as they are, but according as they appear to be, and according as they were commonly read. For do but imagine the Sun had really no other motion but that about its own Axis, and that the Earth did really move about its Axis, and according to the different positions of its side towards the Sun, cause day and night to all places in the temperate and Torrid Zones (for as for these places which lye near the Poles, the diurnal motion of the Earth does not affect them, but the annual, or the place the Earth happens to be in the Ecliptic); I say, suppose the Earth mov'd and the Sun stood still, and suppose also the Israelites understood (as its more than barely probable they did) that the Sun mov'd and the Earth stood still, would it not have appear'd ridiculous in Joshua to have said otherwise than, *Sun, stand thou still in Gibeon, &c.* he spoke to the apprehension of those about him, and did well in it. But as to that great objection of those scrupulous persons who think that truth must always speak; truth may speak something that is different from the truth, but not repugnant to it; do not we read in the *Psalms of the Foundations and Pillars of the Earth*, and in *Job of the breadth of the Earth*? Yet there's nothing in nature more certain than that the Earth is round and hangs in the Air, as other Celestial Orbs do, every little Navigator can tell you better things. But to answer all these things at once, *We have Ideas of things in our minds, and the ends of speech is only to convey those Ideas to one another, and that way is most proper that is most customary.* When therefore Joshua said *Sun, stand thou still, &c.* the Idea he had in his mind was this, let not the night come upon us till we are aveng'd of our Enemies; therefore

when we speak of the truth, or falsehood of a thing, we are not so much to look upon the way of expression as the Idea of the thing that is meant by such expression. Were I askt, whether the way from one Exchange to the other was by Temple-Bar, and I should say yes, when I really believ'd it was not, I should really lye, tho speak a logical truth. And so of the contrary. Lies and truths are in the mind and understanding, words are only organical mediums, but yet great care ought to be taken of 'em. But after all, we are not really perswaded there are more worlds (we mean habitable ones) than ours, we only say 'tis probable and we have very good reasons for it, which it wou'd be too long to mention at present. And as for sinning or not sinning in them, &c. we need not enquire about that, God Almighty is not bound to act by them (if any) as he does by us, his wisdom is unsearchable, he can if he pleases tell how to make and govern worlds without us.

**Quest. 2.** Do not several places in Scripture argue that the Sun goes about the world, but if you say, that's spoke to mens common understanding of things; should not truth speak the truth, and then too it would have been so received and delivered down to us, and easily so applied to our understandings; besides I presume many things of Faith are not suited to vulgar reason: If these be thought worthy of your answer, I desire they may be with meekness, as I have put the question with modesty, and can and must be convinced on better reason, besides I am young and but meanly read, and am a well wisher to your Honourable Society, esteeming you to love Religion, and to be propagators of a good and rational way among us. I am your unknown Servant.

**Ans.** The first answer well consider'd prevents this second.

**Quest. 3.** Gentlemen, I did some time since send you a Relation Esteemed very authentick, much to the purpose following.

Anno. 1376. July 22. At a Town in Saxony called Hameter, being much infested with Rats, a musician called the Pidepiper happened to come, and agreed with the Burgers to destroy them all for a certain sum, then tuning his pipes all the Rats danced after him, and in crossing a River were drowned; he then demanded his pay, which was denied him. — Then he set on piping again, and all the children of the place followed him to a neighbouring hill, which opening swallowed up all but one, who lag'd behind. — Upon which it was decreed in the town, That besides the date of the nativity of our Saviour: they should add. — From the time of the going out of their children, so many years as since that time; which is practis'd to this day. Now Gentlemen, your opinion is desired: what this Piper was, whether man, or Demon? — What and whence he had power to effect such a strange thing, &c. what became of the children? — In this you will gratify several curious persons, and particularly the querist, who is, your very humble Servant.

**Ans.** That they have such an additional date is attested. But 'tis to be observ'd that a story seldom loses in the telling, 'tis possible a man might destroy all, or many of their Rats by poison, which will immediately make 'em run to the water to drink, and dye there, and 'tis also probable the sectet perhaps not being till then practis'd, that out of a pretence (like Juglers) he might play the while, as if that was the Cause. And afterwards for want of payment he might out of revenge take a proper time when most of the town Children were at play together in boats, or some other way, on the water, to drown most of 'em, and make



his Escape, but for a Demon, or any thing of that nature, we believe nothing of it.

*Quest. 4. Is it just that a poor innocent Cuckold should bear the infamy when the persons who confer it upon him seem to be only guilty. From whence may the word be derived? And under how many Circumstances may they be considered?*

*Answer.* Some are in this number of happy creatures and know nothing of it. Some again think they are, but are not; which sort of men are more miserable than, if they really were and knew it not. Historians have likewise told us of some men who have been so without their wives fault, in their mistaking other men for their own husbands. Others again are Cuckolds, and perceiving it but in part, will not believe any thing of it, through the good opinion they have of their wives. Some are sensible of it, and do all they can to hinder it; but others both know and would prevent it if it were in their power, which indeed are the most unhappy of all the kind. The word Cuckold has by some been believed to be ironically derived from the word Cuckow, because this bird lays her eggs in the nest of others; or because such men who too familiarly visit other mens wives, have been often observed to suffer in the same kind; or else from the reason *Pliny* assigns; for Vine-dressers being antiently called Cuckows, viz. slothful, because they deferred cutting their vines till that bird began to sing, which was later then the right time: So that the same name may have been given to such men as through neglect may have caused their wives to seek out some more diligent and industrious companion. Some have derived it from the Greek word *Coecyx*, and others again from the Latin word *Coquus*. But let it be from whence it will, the husband deserves no infamy in the matter, excepting so far, as by his own perfidy, or ill treatment of his wife, he has been partly the cause of her accepting the addresses of another, who will be sure not to omit any thing that lies in his power to add to her felicity. And altho the wife is not in this case excusable, yet the husband may justly be blamed, because he brings it upon himself. Tho where the man honestly performs his part of the covenant, he is undoubtedly free from any disgrace which can happen through the ill conduct of his wife, since what is out of our power does no way affect and concern us; and as a vicious action ought only to be imputed to its author so likewise that shame and dishonour which is the effect on't, can be deservedly imputed to no other. And some whole Nations have been so far from accounting it any dishonour, that the *Aethiops* take it in very good part that their Priest should lye with their wives on the wedding night. There are also many places in the *East Indies* where the men will gladly permit the enjoyment of their wives to such as will give them an *Elephant*; being proud of having a wife valued at so high a rate.

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